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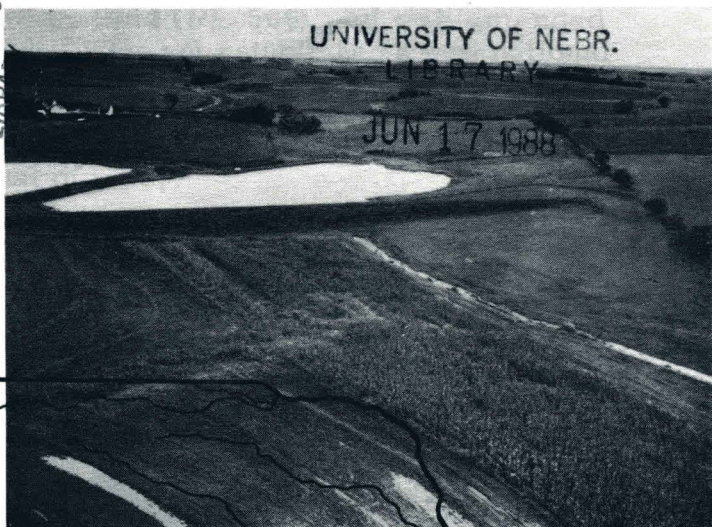
The WATERSHED Program

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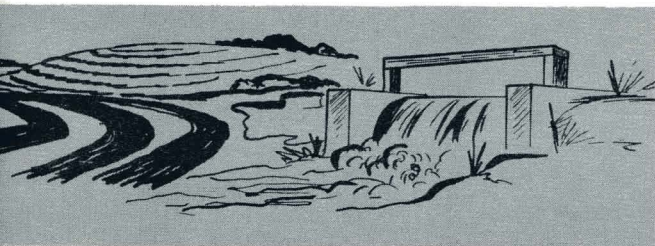
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BY HAROLD H. GILMAN
EXTENSION
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The Watershed Program in Nebraska

Under what legal authorities do watershed programs operate in Nebraska?

The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act was passed in 1954 (PL 566) and was amended in 1956 (PL 1018). This act established a new national policy for Federal assistance to state and local organizations for projects in watershed protection and flood prevention and the conservation, development, utilization and disposal of water.

What is a watershed?

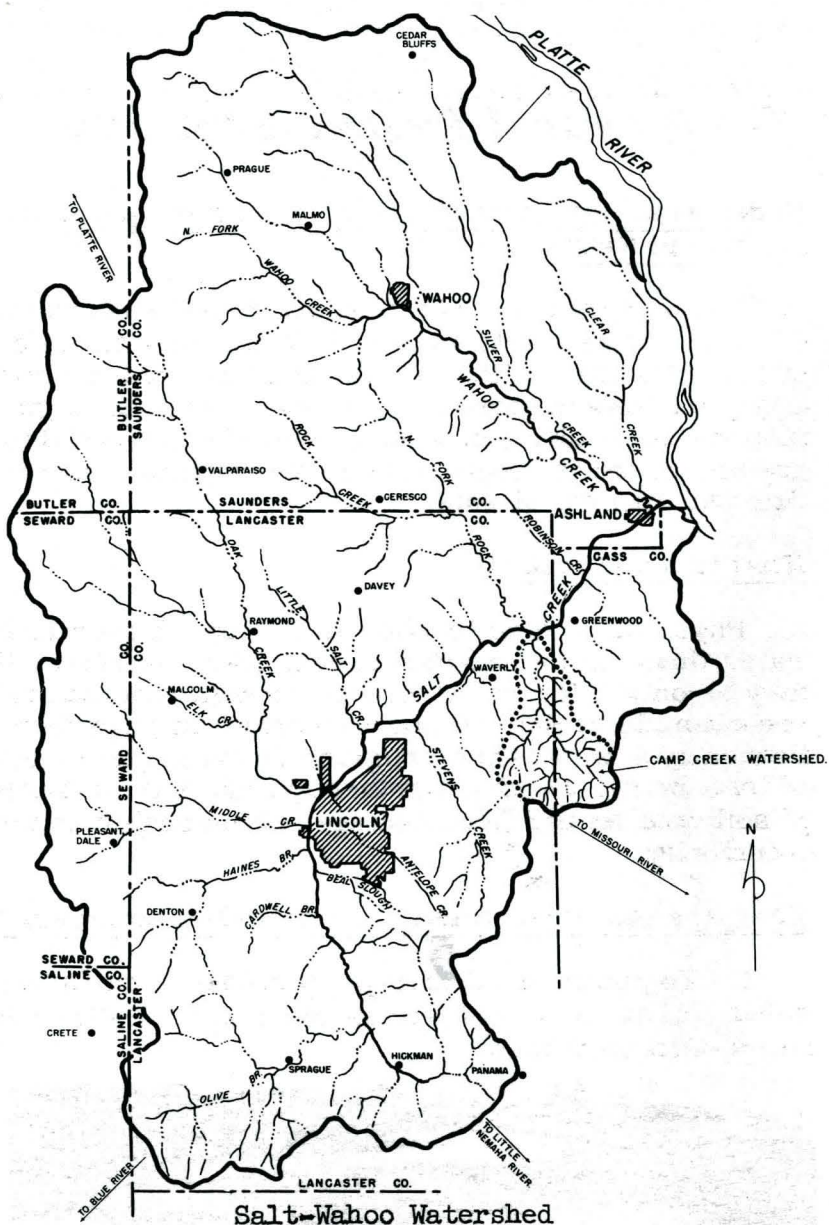
Physically, a watershed is all land from which water flows into a common creek, lake, or river. It may be only a few acres in size or many thousands. See example of Salt-Wahoo watershed on page four. Basically a watershed program is an organization of local people working together to reduce the scourge of soil erosion and flood damage for the benefit of the community.

What are the objectives of a watershed program ?

1. To reduce flood damage, to conserve and store water and to provide adequate drainage wildlife and recreation facilities.



Proper land treatment measures were taken here.



2. To treat farm and ranch lands so as to reduce water runoff, reduce erosion and siltation, increase fertility, and maintain good crop yields.

3. To build gully control and flood prevention structures that are too costly for individual farmers to construct.

4. To provide supplemental water for irrigation, recreation and municipal and industrial use. To drain wet land and stabilize or improve the underground water table.

Who benefits from a watershed program?

Everyone. Farmers will maintain or increase the fertility of their land, get increased yields, have lower production costs and higher income per acre. Flood plains can be more intensely used and are practically insured against flooding. Cities will benefit from higher rural purchasing power. In cases where a city is within a watershed, the operation of the watershed insures against damage from flooding. City, county, state and federal utilities such as roads, highways, railroads and utility lines, have insurance against flood damage.



Floods ruin homes...and railroads.

What are some prerequisites to having a successful watershed program?

1. A thorough understanding and agreement of the objectives of the program by all people living in the watershed.
2. Active soil and water conservation plans on a high percentage of the farms in the watershed.
3. A majority of the people interested in the project and willing to cooperate.
4. A high percentage of the needed land treatment practices on the land, along with the willingness of the landowners and operators to apply the remaining practices that are needed.
5. Local people willing and able to meet their local obligations in the watershed program such as construction contracting, providing easements at their cost for structure sites, and assuming the operation and maintenance costs and responsibilities for all structures.

What will farmers be expected to do?

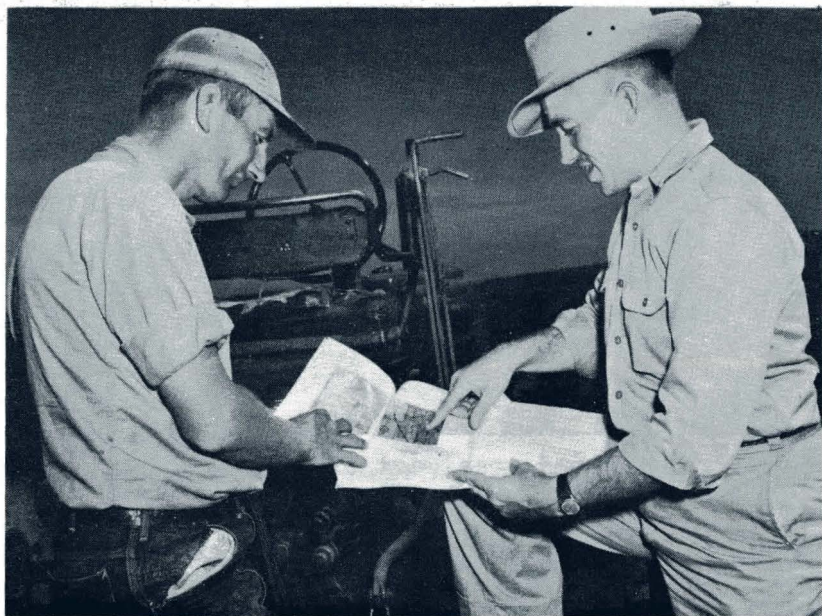
1. To establish and maintain land treatment measures on all their land and to cooperate in the structural phase of this program. This may include such items as terracing, seeding grassed waterways, seeding eroded land to grass, managing range or pasture properly and using conservation cropping systems that include grasses and legumes.

2. To grant easements and right-of-ways for construction sites for dams and channel improvement and to assist in the maintenance of watershed works.

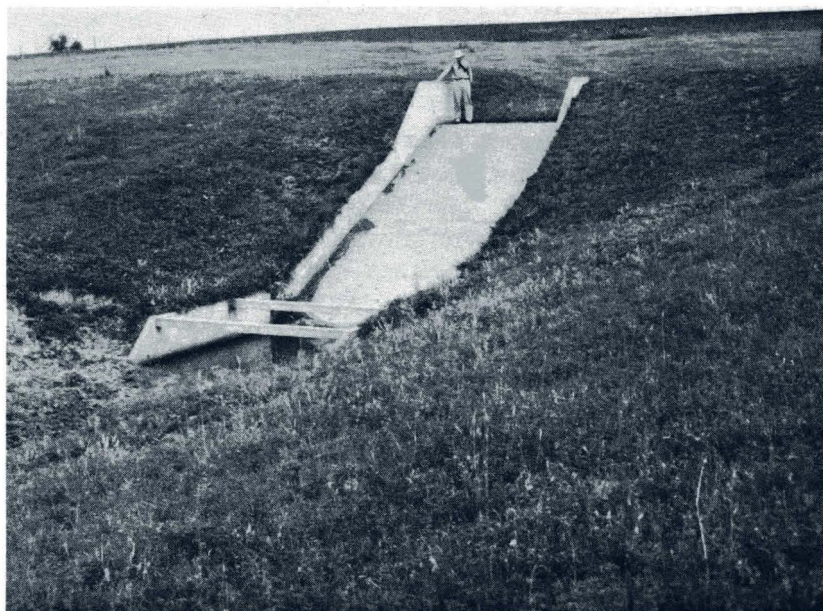
What will the Federal Government do?

1. Provide technical help to farmers and ranchers in conservation planning and installing planned land treatment practices by the Soil Conservation Service through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

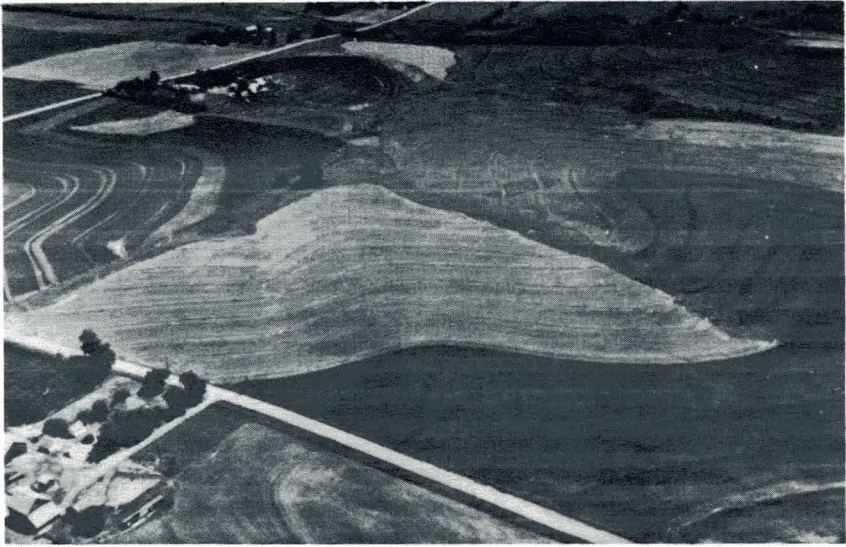
2. Provide engineering assistance in planning and construction supervision for the installation of erosion control and flood prevention structures.



Government offers assistance in planning.



Federal funds are available for construction.



Complete land treatment on 225 acre farm.

3. Provide 100 per cent construction costs for flood prevention structures and related measures . Provide varying percentages of cost-sharing for other types of construction, depending upon its purpose and use. Federal funds are available only when local people meet certain requirements.

What is required of local people?

1. Seventy-five per cent of the needed and recommended land treatment practices are on land in drainage area above gully control and flood prevention structures prior to construction.

2. Fifty per cent of the area above the gully control and flood prevention structure has a conservation plan with the local Soil and Water Conservation district as required by the law.

3. Local people carry out construction contracting, see that water and storage rights are obtained as required by state law, provide, at local costs, the necessary easements and rights-of-way for construction sites, and assume the responsibilities and costs for operation and maintenance of installed works.

How does a watershed program get started?

1. A meeting of interested people should be called and the details of a watershed program explained to them. If there is sufficient interest to go ahead with the project, a temporary organization should be set up. This should include a chairman, secretary and a board of directors.

2. The temporary officers should then meet and adopt an educational and informational program that would give an opportunity for everyone living in the watershed to become fully acquainted with the problems, objectives and local responsibilities involved in successfully carrying out the provision of the watershed program.

3. The temporary steering committee should have as one of its objectives and responsibilities obtaining flood damage information and submission of an application for Watershed Planning Assistance to the Secretary of Agriculture, through the State Soil and Water Conservation Committee and the State Conservationist of the Soil Conservation Service.



Watershed planning meeting...first step.

What help can be expected in carrying out an educational and informational program?

1. There are a number of agencies and people ready and willing to assist in organizing a watershed program. One or more of the following agencies should be invited to all meetings of local people.

- (a) Local soil and water conservation district supervisors.
- (b) State and local personnel of the Soil Conservation Service.
- (c) State and local personnel of the Extension Service.
- (d) The Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Committee.

What is the next step?

After the educational program has been completed and there is sufficient interest in the project, the next steps are:

- 1. Form a steering committee with chairman, secretary-treasurer, board of directors.
- 2. Contact one or more eligible sponsoring organizations and obtain their support.
- 3. Steering Committee should obtain needed information and prepare an application.
- 4. Send the application to the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Committee and State Conservationist of the Soil Conservation Service.

What action does the Nebraska Soil and Water Conservation Committee take upon receipt of the application?

- 1. Request a preliminary field review from the Soil Conservation Service.
- 2. Approve or disapprove the application and advise sponsor(s) of action taken.

3. If approved, the Soil Conservation Service transmits application to the Secretary of Agriculture .

4. Establish priority for planning along with other approved applications as requested by the Soil Conservation Service.

5. When planning is authorized by the Soil Conservation Service, that agency, together with the local sponsor, develops a work plan.

Whose responsibility is it to promote watershed projects?

The watershed law places full responsibility on the local people. Only local eligible organizations can sponsor a project.

When is Federal assistance available to your watershed?

1. When a watershed does not exceed 250,000 acres.

2. When the local organization has legal authority from the State law, to carry out, operate, and maintain the needed works of improvement for watershed protection and flood prevention.

3. When the State Soil and Water Committee approves application for assistance.

4. When the benefits of the proposed work are greater than the costs.

5. When the local sponsoring organization(s) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture agree on a watershed work plan.

6. When the plan is approved, under certain conditions, by committees of Congress.

7. When Federal funds are appropriated to provide help in accordance with the plan.

THE WATERSHED PROGRAM

in Nebraska

